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Lori Wright

UNH Media Relations

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April 1, 2013

Alum, Magazine Writer Named UNH's 2013 Donald Murray Visiting Journalist



Writer Chris Outcalt, '06, has been named the 2013 Donald Murray Visiting Journalist at the University of New Hampshire.

DURHAM, N.H. – Writer Chris Outcalt, '06, has been named the 2013 Donald Murray Visiting Journalist at the University of New Hampshire. He will discuss his career as a magazine writer and share his experiences with journalism students during his weeklong visit beginning April 8, 2013.

As part of his week at UNH, Outcalt will give a talk “Great stories have a soul and other things I’ve learned as a journalist” Tuesday, April 9, 2013, at 5 p.m. in MUB Theater I. The event is free and open to the public.

“I was recently talking with a colleague about great stories and storytelling, and in our discussion she mentioned how she thought great stories have a soul. I was struck by that idea. I couldn’t agree more. So, I plan to talk about how I try to find those particular stories, the ones with souls, and also talk about what excites me about the process of finding them. I think there will always be a place in this world for quality storytelling,” Outcalt says.

Outcalt, an assistant editor at 5280 Magazine in Denver, Colo., writes and edits a variety of pieces for the magazine and for

5280.com on topics including business, real estate, travel, and the environment. His November 2010 narrative feature investigated the first murder in three decades in Vail, a ski resort town in Colorado’s Rocky Mountains. This past year, Outcalt co-wrote a feature-length piece that examined the controversial practice of hydraulic fracturing.

A native of upstate New York, Outcalt started his career at the York Weekly and went on the work for the Portsmouth Herald. He also has reported for weekly and daily newspapers in Colorado. Outcalt has received multiple awards for his work, including being named “Rookie of the Year” by the New Hampshire Press Association in 2007.

Outcalt says he finds working at a magazine to be a wonderful place to tell stories, whether it’s 8,000-word narratives, photo essays, videos, or short profiles. Sometimes even a single number can tell a story.

“A smart editor and colleague once told me that a magazine is a collection of ideas. I like that description, and I like being part of the process of putting together that collection every month. In doing so, it pushes me—I hope, anyway—to be a more thoughtful person, and I think we could all benefit from doing a little more thinking. I’m also incredibly lucky to work with a ridiculously talented staff. I learn new things every day from my colleagues. I still have so much to learn, but I wouldn’t be half the journalist I am today if I hadn’t been lucky enough to work with this group here in Denver,” he says.

Recalling his time at UNH, Outcalt says the university was just the right size for him – “big enough to run into a broad range of ideas and people and small enough to develop meaningful personal relationships with friends and professors. It was a great place to discover what I wanted to do with my professional life.”

He entered the university planning for a degree in biochemistry but had a change of heart after taking an entry-level newswriting course.

“UNH provided me an environment in which I was comfortable taking risks. That’s a cool thing. Everyone should take risks every now and then. Failing is learning. More specifically to journalism, my professors at UNH and my former colleagues at the Portsmouth Herald, where I did my internship, taught me how to be a solid reporter — what questions to ask and how to ask them. They taught me the importance of being accurate. I could go on, but I rely on that foundation of skills every day. I don’t think you can be a good nonfiction writer without being a good reporter. UNH taught me what solid reporting looks like,” Outcalt says.

The Donald Murray Visiting Journalist Program is named in honor of the late Donald Murray, the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer who started the UNH journalism program in 1963. Terry Williams ’80, publisher of the *Telegraph* of Nashua, led the fundraising drive for the program, with primary support coming from The McLean Contributionship and from UNH journalism alumni. The Donald Murray Visiting Journalist Program brings accomplished alumni journalists to campus each year for week-long residencies during which they conduct classes, work with students and student media, and give a public lecture. Recent visiting alums include Pulitzer Prize-winning Kevin Sullivan ’81, Dana Jennings, ’80, of *The New York Times* and Chelsea Conaboy, ’04, of Boston.com and the Boston Globe.

The program is sponsored by the UNH Journalism Program, the UNH English Department, the *Telegraph* of Nashua, and the McLean Contributionship.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

PHOTO

Writer Chris Outcalt, ’06, has been named the 2013 Donald Murray Visiting Journalist at the University of New Hampshire.

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/chriso.jpg>

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Media Contact: [Lori Wright](#) | 603-862-0574 | UNH Media Relations

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